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The Friday Letter

Vol. 13 No. 7

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FNS Team Finishes Senate Q&A's in Record Time

After five days of relentless work, the FNS/HNIS team submitted its Q&A's to the Senate Appropriations Committee March 29. The first Agriculture agency to do so, FNS was only successful through the outstanding cooperation of staff from all levels. The process involved a massive group effort, of top priority, and it serves as an excellent example of teamwork both within the National Office, and between FNS and HNIS.

The work drew the special attention of Stephen Dewhurst, director of the USDA Office of Budget and Program Analysis, who wrote the following to FNS Administrator Betty Jo Nelsen:

"Congratulations to your staff on a job well done! FNS's good work for the second consecutive year certainly enhances the Department's working relationship with the Senate. We applaud the high standard FNS has established for responsiveness to the Congress."

The Q&A's are a 35-page report to the Senate's Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies answering 75 questions about FNS and four on HNIS on the President's budget proposal for 1992. The questions were posed by Senators Harkin, Burdick and Cochran, of the Senate subcommittee, following March 22 testimonies by Assistant Secretary Catherine Bertini and Administrator Betty Jo Nelsen. FNS's Budget Division coordinated the response, for which the agencies had five days to provide details on many complex policy issues.

Continued, page 3.



Above is staff from **Financial Management**, the Q&A coordinators (l to r): Shari Breene, Carolyn Chandler, Aldora Lee, Ken Bresnehan, Susan Wright-Corrozo, Jerry Boling, *Frank Gatchell, *Hilda Davis. * Not Pictured.

Speaking personally...

Have you ever watched geese in flight? Those long "V"-shaped formations are picturesque symbols of migration, but they serve a useful purpose too. Geese in that configuration can fly 71% further than a goose flying alone. That's impressive teamwork! I'll bet it's more fun too.

Communications Workshop

Judith Lewis, Confidential Assistant to the Administrator, has just returned from Atlanta, where she conducted two communications workshops for FNS regional staff. Part of a series of workshops for both National Office and regional staff, the Atlanta sessions were attended by 39 people interested in improving their personal communication skills.

The FWP-sponsored workshops focused on increasing self-confidence through improvement in several skills: public speaking, organizing thoughts, conflict resolution, interview techniques, making introductions, listening and analyzing an audience. The skills, in turn, helped participants increase self-esteem and reduce anxieties over public speaking.

Ms. Lewis will hold three one-hour sessions in the National Office on April 11, 23, and 25. Since the sessions will cover different skills, employees can attend one or all of the workshops. Other regional sessions will be announced.

from the editor

"Mid-Swap News"

For those of you who haven't yet heard the news, Darlene Barnes and I are "swapping" lives for a month. That includes swapping editing jobs: Darlene is now working on the WRO Thursday Letter, and I will be editing the Friday Letter.

We're planning a special edition of the Friday Letter during the first week in May to discuss "The Swap," and let you all know how this came about and all of its numerous advantages.

But for now, I just wanted to say hello from my new vantage point, and remind you to send any Friday Letter articles either to my attention (Kristen Bole) or to the "Friday Letter" cc:mailbox.

...k

SERO EEO Staff Attends Alabama Awards Luncheon

by Toni Young, SERO

SERO's equal opportunity staff participated in the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) first civil rights/equal employment award luncheon. During the luncheon, state and local staff were recognized for their accomplishments in the area of equal opportunity for DHR staff and the public they serve. DHR Commissioner Andy Hornsby made the award presentations. Gary Cooper, assistant secretary of the Air Force and former Alabama commissioner, provided the keynote address.



Pictured L to R are: Meagan Meacham (seated), social worker, Chambers County; Assistant Secretary Cooper; Jane Wetley, social worker, Marshall County; Commissioner Hornsby; Erin Wheeler, Mobile County director; and Sylvester Smith, DHR director of civil rights/equal employment.



ON THE HILL

by Bob Beard

No bills were introduced over the past two weeks, as members were at home during the Spring recess. Floor action will open again on Tuesday, April 9 in both the Senate and the House.

Just before the break, however, several members did introduce bills that deal with hunger, and would affect FNS programs. Senator James Sasser (D-TN) introduced S. 602, the "Childhood Hunger Prevention Act of 1991." This bill is a comprehensive bill with numerous provisions, focusing on increasing benefits in the Federal food programs. Some of the provisions for the Food Stamp Program include:

- increasing the Thrifty Food Plan by one-half percent per year up to 105 percent by 1995.
- excluding child support payments from income.
- eliminating the cap on excess shelter deductions (now set at \$177 per month).
- raising the vehicle asset limit to \$5,500 and from October 1, 1992 on the limit would be indexed as determined by the Secretary.
- requiring demonstration projects to test changes in administrative procedures and eligibility determination procedures on barriers to increase participation in rural areas.
- authorizing up to \$1 million to make grants to public or private organizations to improve effectiveness in delivering food stamp benefits to the homeless.

The major Special Nutrition Programs provisions in S. 602 are to expand assistance to homeless children by increasing funds for homeless pilot projects into other cities, and to increase the WIC authorization to \$2.7 billion in 1992.

In the House, Congressman Leon Panetta (D-CA) has introduced the "Mickey Leland Childhood Hunger Relief Act." This bill contains provisions that affect the Food Stamp Program (including many of the same or similar provisions to the Sasser bill). These provisions were at one point contained in last year's Farm Bill, but did not pass in the final bill. A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT); this bill is S. 757, "Mickey Leland Childhood Hunger Relief Act."

FNS Teamwork on Q&A's

Continued from page 1.

The Q&A Process

When the President offers a budget to Congress, which happened this February, the House of Representatives and the Senate both schedule hearings on the new budget. This year, the Senate chose to conduct its hearings first, and on March 22, Catherine Bertini, Betty Jo Nelsen, and Sue Ann Ritchko, from HNIS, testified before the Senate subcommittee. The purpose of the hearings is two-fold: it allows congressional representatives to ask questions about the programs, in order for them to understand the need for funding levels; and it offers the affected agencies a chance to explain and substantiate the President's request.

Since Congress often needs highly technical information, the subcommittee members involved provide the agency with a list of questions for further clarification. The agency's response to the questions, as well as a transcript of the original hearing, is included in the public record.

Normally, all questions are given to those who testified as they leave the hearing. This year, however, FNS only received 50 of the questions at that time; the team did not get the remaining 25 questions until 3 days later, but was still able to complete the entire task in the allotted 5 days.

After the House hearing May 7, FNS will repeat the process with questions from the House subcommittee. Normally, the House asks up to three times the number of questions as the Senate, so FNS has another great cooperative effort to look forward to!

The FNS Q&A Team

At right: **Nutrition Technical Services Division** staff (l to r): Ruth Marsden, Denise Tillman, Kelly Felix, Cindy Widby, Joan Turetsky, *Mary Statton, *Martha Poolten, *Joe Shepherd.

Below: **Child Nutrition Division** staff: Chuck Heise, Bridget Brutski, Shirley Hutchens, Russ Gardner, Terry Hallberg, Joan Tressler, Bob Eadie, Sam Bauer, *Lou Pastura.
* Not Pictured.



Right: **Deputy Administrator, Special Nutrition Programs**, Robert Washington, Barbara Hollman, *Stan Garnett.
* Not Pictured.



At left (l to r): **Office of Analysis and Evaluation**: Denise Thomas, Barbara Fay, Steve Carlson, Lisa Greenwood, Christy Schmidt, Janet Tognetti, Diana Perez, Carol Kelly, Fran Zorn, Matt McKearn, *Sandy Bastone, *Joyce Gillum, *Bob Dalrymple, *Carol Olander, *Jan Lilja
* Not Pictured





At left: **Food Stamp Program:** Art Foley, Sherri Utz, Pat Seward, Mattie Jones, John Busey, Jeff Cohen, Bonny O'Neil, *Gary Batko, *Marilyn Carpenter
* Not Pictured



At right: **Supplemental Food Program Division:** Debbie McIntosh, Hayes Brown, DeJaun Wright, Ken Offerman, Barbara Jendrysik, Maeve Myers, Patty Cunningham, Kay Ghahremani, Ron Vogel, *Jackie Williams, *Sharon Wynne
* Not Pictured



At left: **Food Distribution Division:** Margie Livingston, Trish Bassett, Alberta Frost, Mary Mills, *Virginia Ross
* Not Pictured

From the Health Unit...

On the list of April activities from the health unit is a program called **"Coping with Allergies."** Dr. Claus Helbing will give a slide presentation and answer questions on allergies, so if you have ever had allergies, or don't know much about them, this is a great opportunity to have your questions answered. Join us April 17 at 10 a.m. in the fourth floor conference room.

Also on the agenda is "The Great American **Food Fight Against Cancer Day**," sponsored by the American Cancer Society. The activities are part of a nationwide initiative to reduce colon cancer by teaching people to eat more foods rich in vitamins A and C, choose low-fat products, increase fiber intakes, and "visit the cabbage family more often."

There is a short quiz available in the health unit for anyone who wants to evaluate his or her eating habits. Also, all people who take the test and sign a pledge sheet to support the Great American Food Fight against Cancer will be eligible for a drawing for a free lunch. So go down to the health unit, pick up your quiz, and sign up!!



NTEU President Ron Johnson has his fat content checked at the health fair.

HeadQuarters Health Fair

FNS held its second annual health fair April 3 in the national office in conjunction with Occupational Health Services, giving employees a chance to check their current health status and find out ways to improve it. Included in the booths were free cholesterol screening, posture analysis, chiropractic counseling, and body fat measure. Employees also had the choice of an inexpensive Cardiac Profile, serum chemistry test, and/or mammogram on the premises. Those who had blood tests will be sent an analysis within 7-10 days, along with a thorough explanation of the results, and advice on further procedures.

"Back Exercises in Your Chair"



When you are active or move around in your chair, you decrease the potential for injury by decreasing fatigue and muscle strain. Complete these exercises throughout the day to ease muscle tension and maintain efficient posture. Complete each exercise 5 to 10 times. Stretch only to the point of comfort.

1. Chin Tuck - To strengthen the muscles of our neck. Simply glide your neck straight back, as if trying to create a double chin. Hold position for a few seconds. Repeat.

2. Sloughline Stretch - Try to lengthen an imaginary line that stretches from your navel to your breast bone. You should feel your spine straighten. Hold 10 seconds.

3. Shoulder Circles - To relax the muscles in the shoulders and upper and middle back. Shrug both up to your ears then pull them back and drop them down in a circular motion.

4. Middle Back Stretch - Bending both elbows, place arms out toward your sides at chest height. Pull elbows gently backward. You should feel the muscles working between your shoulder blades. Hold 10 seconds.

5. Pelvic Tilt - To strengthen the muscles in the lower abdomen. Place your hands on your pelvis and practice increasing and reducing the curve of your lower back by pushing your hips forward, then back.

6. Back massage - To relax lower back muscles. Drop you head down to your knees and rub the muscles on your back.

7. Back Bend - Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. With your hands in the small of your back for support, slowly bend your torso backward, arching your back as far as comfortable (shown above). Slowly return to upright.

FRAC Releases Child Hunger Survey

by Wini Scheffler

At a press conference Tuesday, March 26, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) released a report estimating that 5.5 million--or one out of eight--American children 12 years of age or younger are hungry. Extensive media coverage underlined the widespread interest in hunger and children's welfare issues.

FRAC drew the estimates from its Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project (CCHIP), a survey conducted between February 1989 and August 1990 in the eight states of Minnesota, Florida, Connecticut, California, Michigan, Washington, Alabama and New York. FRAC staff visited FNS headquarters on Monday to provide a briefing, and answer questions, prior to releasing the CCHIP report.

Based on its findings, the CCHIP report proposes a major expansion in Federal food and nutrition programs. According to FRAC's Lynn Parker, the study revealed that many eligible persons don't participate in food programs, and many who participate still experience hunger.

At the same time, the findings indicated that over 90 percent of persons interviewed knew about food stamps. Almost all eligible low-income children surveyed participated in the school lunch program, and many people used several food assistance programs.

CCHIP recommendations include full funding for WIC, improved access and increased benefits in the Food Stamp Program, and expanded coverage by School Breakfast, Child and Adult Care and Summer Food Programs.

In expressing support for FRAC's efforts to end hunger, Assistant Secretary Bertini emphasized that helping children in need is a priority of the Bush Administration.

She mentioned FNS actions to increase WIC, school breakfast, and child care food coverage; expand food stamp outreach; and improve program coordination and management.

"Major changes in food stamp benefits and rules are big ticket items," she said, "We'll continue to discuss with you what can be realistically accomplished within Federal budget limitations."

In addition to its on-site briefing for FNS staff, the food advocacy group included a letter from Ms. Bertini in the press packet distributed to the media on Tuesday.

"Back Tips for People Who Sit"



The National Spine Center offered the following simple advice at the fair on how sedentary employees can protect their backs:

1. Use a lumbar (low back) support to keep you from slouching.
2. Slide your chair under your desk as far as possible, so you are sitting directly over your work.
3. When reading or using a computer, try to get your work up to eye level.
4. Move frequently throughout the day. Change your position every 30 minutes.
5. When bending in your chair, slide to the end of the chair. Support your back by placing one hand on the desk and one foot in front of you.
6. When turning in a chair, try to move your body as a single unit, rather than twisting.
7. When you are using a phone, use your desk to support the arm that holds the receiver.

Focus on Native Americans

Nutrition and Health Planning Meeting in WRO



In an effort to find new ways to combat Native American nutrition-related health problems, the WRO hosted a Native American Nutrition and Health Planning Committee meeting March 7. The committee, consisting of 10 representatives from diverse tribes and nutritional/health concentration, discussed several issues, but focused primarily on providing more effective nutrition education to Native American clients.

As a result of the meeting, the Navajo Nation FDPIR, WIC Program, and Indian Health Service is developing an integrated nutrition services plan as a potential FNS demonstration project, and the WRO will work with smaller reservations, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, to develop an agenda for a Native American workshop for small tribes. Participants on the committee have agreed to serve as an ad hoc advisory board to the WRO on Native American nutrition issues.



Kitchen detail at Reserve, Kansas: MPRO's Evie Ashmore prepares cornbread as Bart Bushman assists.

Mountain Plains Leads Pilot Workshop for Kansas Tribal Leaders

by Joanne Widner, MPRO Public Affairs

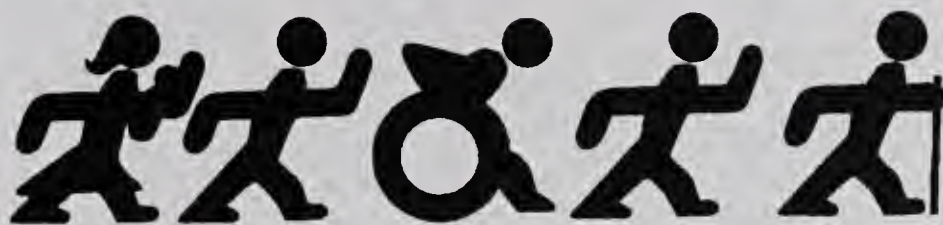
On March 19, 27 program leaders and tribal representatives from Kickapoo, Potawatami, and United Tribes of Kansas met for a 2-1/2-day nutrition education training workshop in Reserve, Kansas. The pilot program--which may be adapted for other reservation groups nationwide--was developed by Mountain Plains staff with the aid of a steering committee representing the Kansas tribes.

A Regional and field office team led by MPRO Nutritionist Stella Nash addressed tribal dietary concerns and ways to improve health of those living on and near reservations through a balanced diet, using USDA's dietary guidelines for Americans and USDA-donated commodities. Hands-on exercises let tribal participants plan menus, do a blind comparison of commodity and name-brand canned fruit cocktail (in which the commodity product scored highest in every area), and structure best use of materials for their own programs.

FNS staff taking part in the presentation included Nash, MPRO Food Distribution Programs Director John Merz, Evie Ashmore and Bart Bushman of FDP, and Beverley Bennett and OIC Dan Chambers from the Wichita, Kansas, Field Office. Jean Wirtz of NTS Division also observed the workshop. On the final day, MPRO Administrator David B. Alspach awarded training certificates and presented certificates of appreciation to the steering committee for their efforts. Alspach complimented tribal leaders on their concern for the importance of nutrition in today's world.



Potawatami FDP Director Mary LeClere stops for breaktime at Kansas workshop.



Workforce Diversity Questions and Answers

Below is a question Betty Jo Nelsen thought would be of particular interest to everyone:

Q. If in theory, the government is already an equal opportunity employer, and workforce diversity is not a quota system and is not EEO, then, what is it and why is it necessary?

The government, by law, is an equal opportunity employer. To meet that goal, there are EEO policies and procedures which agencies follow. Among those policies are expanded recruitment efforts, employee development and supervisory training, to encourage hiring and promoting qualified individuals, to prevent or relieve under-representation if it exists.

The notion of a quota system is often applied, negatively, to the concept of EEO. This happens when it is perceived that persons with disabilities, minorities and women (whether qualified or not) have a greater advantage simply by their identity in one of these categories. Legal measures to relieve extreme situations of statistical under-representation do sometimes require meeting goals, but our agency's employee composition does not warrant those measures in an extensive, across-the-board manner.

Workforce diversity at FNS, on the other hand, is a response to the changing composition of the nation's employment pool. It is also a value statement which suggests that an organization should strive for diversity--not because it must, by law--but because differences can enrich the organization's culture and its work products.

When an organization with a diverse workforce benefits from different problem-solving approaches, communication techniques, and leadership styles, it will come to reflect those values in its hiring and promotion practices. Such qualities are not unique to the disabled, minorities or women. Often, however, a more diverse workforce will demonstrate these skills to achieve its full potential. As such qualities become commonly utilized and valued by all members of the workforce, the career advancement of those who have demonstrated them best, whether or not they are in an under-represented category, should follow. This is a distinctly different process from the imposition of formal or informal quotas.



Managing Your Job and Career

**Learn necessary steps in
career and life planning.**

**Find out how the
workplace will change in
the next decade.**

**Attend workshops geared
to successful job-seeking.**

A one-day workshop on job skills will be held Saturday, April 13 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at Robinson High School in Fairfax. Discussions will include preparing an SF171, networking, starting a business, and how to negotiate a salary. Carletha Washington and Eunice Bowman, both from FNS, will speak at the workshop, which is sponsored by the Fairfax County Career Development Center for Women and the Fairfax County Commission for Women. The \$10 fee can be waived for financial need. Pre-registration is required, so call (703) 750-0633, or ask Eunice Bowman in Civil Rights for more information.

Friday Letter Vacancy Listing by Vacancy Number

JOB TITLE	AREA OF CONSID.	SERIES	GRADE	CLOSING	VACANCY NUMBER	OFFICE LOCATION
Nutritionist	(A)	GS-0630	12	04/15/91	91-50	NTSD
Contract Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-1102	5/7	04/29/91	91-59	ASD
Food Program Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-0120	5/7	04/15/91	91-60	PDD
Food Program Specialist	(FNS-HQ)	GS-0120	9/11	04/08/91	91-61	PDD
Food Program Specialist	(A)	GS-0120	9/11	04/08/91	91-61A	PDD
Food Program Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-0120	7	04/15/91	91-62	PDD
Management Analyst	(FNS-HQ)	GS-0343	9	04/08/91*	91-64	OGAPI
Food Program Officer	(A)	GS-0120	14	05/06/91	91-65	SFPD
Food Program Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-0120	5/7	04/15/91	91-66	CND
Secretary (Typing)	(A-LCA)	GS-0318	5/6	04/22/91	91-67	ASD
Secretary (Typing)	(A-LCA)	GS-0318	5/6	04/22/91	91-68	BRD
Secretary (Typing)	(A-LCA)	GS-0318	5	04/22/91	91-69	PDD
Language Interpreter Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-1001	7/9	04/22/91	91-70**	PED
Program Analyst	(A)	GS-0343	9/11	05/06/91	91-71	OAE
Program Analyst	(A)	GS-0343	12/13	05/06/91	91-72	OAE
Food Program Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-0120	5	04/29/91	91-73	PAD
Food Program Specialist	(A-LCA)	GS-0120	5/7	04/29/91	91-74	PAD
Accounting Technician	(A-LCA)	GS-0525	5	04/29/91	91-75	ASD
Nutritionist	(A)	GS-0630	11/12	04/29/91	91-H-13	HNIS
Chief, Food Consp. Rsc. Br.	(A)	GM-0493	14	05/06/91	91-H-17	HNIS
Dir. Nutr. Monitoring Div.	(A)	GM-0401	15	05/06/91	91-H-18	HNIS
Nutritionist	(HNIS-W)	GS-0630	12	04/08/91	91-H-19	HNIS
Nutritionist	(A)	GS-0630	9/11	05/20/91	91-H-20	HNIS
Nutritionist	(A)	GS-0630	11/12	05/06/91	91-H-21	HNIS
Math Statistician	(A)	GS-1529	9/11/12	05/06/91	91-H-22	HNIS

AREA OF CONSIDERATION

(A) - All Sources
 (A-LCA) . . . - All Sources, Local Commuting Area
 (FNS-HQ) . . - FNS Headquarters Wide
 (HNIS-W) . . - Human Nutrition Info. Service - Wide

* Corrects Closing Date

** Temporary NTE 1 Year, part-time NTE

OFFICE LOCATION

CND Child Nutrition Division
 NTSD Nutrition and Technical Services Division
 PED Personnel Division
 HNIS Human Nutrition Information Service
 PDD Program Development Division
 ASD Administrative Services Division
 OGAPI . . . Office of Gov. Affairs and Public Info.
 SFPD Supplemental Food Programs Division
 BRD Benefit Redemption Division
 PAD Program Accountability Division
 OAE Office of Analysis & Evaluation

Will you get a blue ribbon during National Fitness Month?

Kristen Bole, Editor
 and Desktop Design
 Pamela D. Faith, HQs Photography

The Friday Letter is published every two weeks by the Public Information Staff of the Food and Nutrition Service. To update your mailing address or to alter the number of copies you receive, please mail your changes to FNS Public Information Staff, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 819, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. Telephone: 703/756-3286

Upcoming Events

April

- 16-18 Regional Financial Management Information System Meeting - HQs. Hands-on training for regional FM staff.
- 17 FWP meeting - HQs. 7th flr. conf. rm., 10-11.
- 17 "Coping with Allergies" -- Dr. Claus Helbling. Slide show and Q&A session. 4th flr. conf. rm., 10:00.
- 17 - 19 Michigan Annual WIC conference.
- 18 "The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer Day." See health unit column for details.
- 18 Northeast Breastfeeding Promotion Conference - NH & VT
- 19 Northeast Breastfeeding Promotion Conference - ME.
- 22-26 Senior Managers' Meeting.